



## New year roaming - it's Free

Roger Wheeler – *The roaming pen...*

Good heavens its 2009, doesn't time fly when you're having fun, well I hope you've been having fun. 2008 came and went; we hardly noticed. We did find out how cheap travel can be, with Advance train tickets now being sold all over the Country without you having to go through an interrogation. You can go to London for just £3.00 each way, the £10 DaySave tickets which let you travel anywhere on the Southern train network, National Express East Coast the major train booking web site etc.

But I can now reveal an even bigger secret and I apologise for this particular piece of news being only of interest to our more mature readers. If you are fortunate enough to be over sixty, which as we all know is the new forty, and have got yourself a National bus pass then you can use National Express coaches FREE. Yes you can and have been able to do so since last April but no one told us. From Brighton's Pool Valley\* you can take the number 25, the London service, just show your pass and off you go. Of course you can hop off at Gatwick which is good news but you can't go to any other airport, Heathrow for example. So for us down here we can only get the number 25 which goes all the way to Victoria. You can also get 'almost' to Portsmouth, quite where almost is I'm not sure. I tried this out recently and discovered that if you are travelling down to Brighton from Gatwick then you can catch any coach, it is all unnecessarily complicated.

The reason is, when the Government introduced the National Bus Pass last April the legislation included all routes that are designated as bus routes. There

are probably hundreds of bus routes across the Country that are also covered by National Express coaches. But they are not published, National Express say that it's all very complicated and a "grey area". You have to call them in advance to ask if the particular journey that you want to take is a designated bus route and is available for free travel, the number is 0844 844 2304.

Of course they hedge this with all sorts of off-putting rules; in essence you can travel free so long as there are seats available. If the coach is fully booked with paying customers you're out of luck, this runs contrary to the spirit, if not the letter of the law.

Naturally they don't want to take you for free, although the Government and local authorities reimburse them, it takes time and some effort for them, one's heart bleeds.

\*Have you seen the 'wonderful' new look Pool Valley bus station, where did all the money go, you may well ask. Its just lots more pavement. But they are about to dig it all up again, of course how silly of us to think that six months of disruption would have been enough. It seems that they forgot to put a new gas pipe in, or maybe its water, whatever, it's all coming up again. Then National Express will build a ticket office now that will be



novel, a bus station where you can actually buy a ticket.

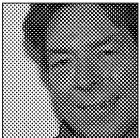
So in the words of one my favourite bands 'Divine Comedy'

"When you're sad and feeling blue, with nothing better to do don't just sit there feeling stressed take a trip on the National Express".

*Pedants corner: You will now know that there is no 's' on euro, There's no 's' on Tesco either despite 99% of the population referring to our largest retailer as Tesco's, am I the only person to notice that we Brits have a penchant for adding an 's' to lots of*

*words, usually supermarkets. It's all Sainsbury's fault as they do have an 's on their shops. Have you also noticed that no one 'shops' any more, as you will have noticed all restaurants 'source' their food locally rather than simply buy it locally. So rather than shopping we are now 'sourcing' our food. This is particularly interesting when you discover that most restaurants are 'sourcing' from Asda and Tesco, well that's local isn't it?*

**Take it easy and have a really Happy New Year.**



## Grumpy old git, Gary

Ginger whinger

Since my last column, people have been sending me literally hundreds of emails asking for more invaluable advice on those problems that crop up at this time of year. Unfortunately, they wasted their time, as I haven't got a computer, so I'll just have to make them up instead.

Q) *Every time I get at least one present from someone who has obviously spent more on me than I have on them. Is there a solution to this?*

A) Yes, you tell all your family and friends that this year, just for a laugh, you all have to buy each other presents from Poundland, no exceptions. What you then do is spend your normal amount. (In my case, this could be as much as £3.) You then include a note saying you thought far too much of them to go through with your original idea. This should make the buggers squirm until well into the New Year. It gives me a warm glow just thinking about it!

Q) *I recently took my children to see Santa clause. I explained to them that nowadays they are not allowed to sit on Santa's lap or have photos taken. As a result, they are now convinced that Santa is a fat bearded old pervert with paedophile tendencies, aided and abetted by a smaller man dressed in green tights and a hat with a bell on top. Do you think this has all gone a bit mad?*

A) I certainly do! It sound as if this establishment failed to supply your children with high-visibility vests and protective goggles. You can get a nasty poke in the eye off a reindeer's antler you know. If I were you, I'd sue them.

Q) *Owing to the crazy kredit crunch, I can't afford to spend as much on presents as previous years, what do I do?*

A) The same as me. Go somewhere really expensive (i.e. Selfords or Harridges) and peel off the little price sticker and put it somewhere unobtrusive on your present. Don't try this with a dancing Santa from Poundland, by the way. You're fooling no one.

Q) *I have a friend who, every year buys me a CD of whoever is the latest winner of the x factor. How do I get my revenge?*

A) Need I mention Chris De Burgh?

Q) *At this time of year, my partner starts dragging me round supermarkets armed with a shopping list with three items on it. Bread, milk and one each of everything else on display. This invariably causes friction between us. Can you help?*

A) I solved this problem some years ago with my ex-partner, what I did was arranged a fair and equitable distribution of the Xmas shopping which we then did separately. Our respective shopping lists read thus; mine – beer and fags. Hers – everything else. Problem solved, I think you'll agree. (Where did it all go wrong for us, I wonder? Ah well.)

Q) *Sod all this Xmas bollocks! What I'd like to know is with the rise in popularity of a 67-year-old man called Seasick Steve, do you think there's room in the music industry for a slightly younger man called something like Gastric Gas?*

A) No. and on that note, have a good Xmas and hopefully see you next year.

### Learn Spanish

With a qualified Argentinian teacher

Phone Natalia 07854 348 782

or email nataliapezzi@yahoo.com.ar

### Small plumbing jobs

NO CALL OUT CHARGE

01273 881537

